

## Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: [USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov](mailto:USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov); Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions?

<b>Report Date Range:</b> (e.g. October 1-March 31, 20XX)	April 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015
<b>Today's Date:</b>	March 14, 2016
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Susie Sutphin
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	805-889-3587
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	susie@tahoefoodhub.org
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Tahoe Food Hub
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Building the Capacity of the Sierra Nevada Foodshed
<b>Grant Agreement Number:</b> (e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)	Agreement #14-LFPPX-CA-0024
<b>Year Grant was Awarded:</b>	2014
<b>Project City/State:</b>	Truckee, CA
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	100,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

- ☐ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).
- ☐ Different individual: Name: \_\_\_\_\_; Email: \_\_\_\_\_; Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0287. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable sex, marital status, or familial status, parental status religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative and have been approved by LFPP staff, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made toward each one and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

- i. **Goal/Objective 1: Expand the number of growers in our network from 20-35**

- a. **Progress Made:** From October 2014- March 2015, we increased our network of farms from 20 to 35. From March 2015 to December 2015, we increased to over 40; 50 if you include additional specialty producers of sauces, pickles, pastas, etc.

- b. **Impact on Community:** Building a regional food system is a balance of supply and demand. The only way to increase demand for local food is to ensure confidence in a consistent and guaranteed supply. The Local Food Promotion grant gave us the capacity to be more active in securing the supply of our local foodshed. We could reach out to new farmers, enhance our crop planning capabilities and dig deeper to further develop relationships with existing growers. Increasing access to local food for our community is one of our main organizational objectives and to achieve this goal, we need enough farmers to meet growing demand.

- ii. **Goal/Objective 2: Help Farmers gain access to technical support and training**

- a. **Progress Made:** In November 2014, we hosted our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Farmer & Chef Symposium with 20 of our farmers and 40 of our wholesale buyers. In October 2015, we hosted a Small Farm Workshop with over 50 farmers and 40 farms represented. The first session scaled food safety criteria for small farms so they could develop a food safety plan with limited resources. The second session showed small farms how to create an effective crop plan and how incorporate that crop plan when working with a food hub. In November 2015, we hosted our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Farmer & Chef Symposium where we will took 35 of our chefs on a foothill farm tour and finished with a farm to table lunch at one of our farms. 25 of our farmers joined us to meet the chefs. Most of the expenses for the symposiums and workshops were paid from non-grant funds.

- b. **Impact on Community:** The Tahoe Food Hub firmly believes that a critical role of a food hub is to supply technical support and training for its farmers. We are thrilled that this grant enabled us to provide this service which has far reaching benefits. By providing technical training to our growers, we support the local farm community, gain their trust as an advocacy organization that wants to preserve their agrarian lifestyle and advance sustainable farming methods. Indirectly, these trainings increase the security of our food supply and the sustainability of our organization to have a secure supply chain for the long term. The symposiums support the core of our Farm to Market program. The best way to increase demand for local food is to introduce the wholesale buyers to the farmers. It is an invaluable connection that reminds chefs what and who they are supporting. Without building those relationships, a food hub would just be a regular food distributor.

- iii. **Goal/Objective 3: Increase staff and equipment needs to expand the regional foodshed.**

**a. Progress Made:**

1. **Staff** - We hired the two positions outlined in our grant narrative: 1) Producer Partner Coordinator to work with our growers on crop planning and ensure we have the supply to meet growing demand for local food. 2) Marketing Manager to educate wholesale buyers on the importance of local food and increase demand by opening new accounts to buy food sourced from the food hub. In June, we realized the work for the Marketing Manager required additional support and with permission from LFPP, split the allocated funds for this position with an assistant Marketing Manager. The extra capacity of our Producer Partner and Marketing Manager enabled us to hire one staff person to help in the Farm Shop one day week. The Farm Shop position was paid with funds from the general budget and not grant funds. The Farm Shop is our weekly produce stand that is open two days a week and a direct way for the public learn more about our farmers and buy direct.
2. **Software** - We determined that the \$19,352 was not enough to hire a software contractor and build our own online ordering system so we partnered with an existing platform, Local Orbit, to enhance their features and meet our needs. It was a slight change to the plan in the narrative but accomplished the same goal. We received USDA approval prior to requesting advanced payment. Advanced payment was made in May and all the software upgrades were completed by October 2015.
3. **Retrofitting the van** – Advanced payment was made in May and the refrigeration conversion kit was installed in May and the box truck has been in operation since June 2015.
4. **Upgrading the Feather River Food Co-op Cooler** – The upgrade and repairs to the Feather River Food Co-op Cooler was completed later than anticipated. The Feather River Co-op Cooler is covered under the contract with Plumas Rural Services and payment is included in their invoices which have been submitted and paid. The repairs were made between Mar-May 2015 and has been in working order since June 2015.

**b. Impact on Community:** The impact of this goal had the most tangible results...we hired four staff, improved our online ordering system, obtained a second delivery vehicle and secured a 3<sup>rd</sup> mini-hub where produce from another farm region could be collected and aggregated. Hiring four staff provided four new jobs in the local community/economy. Additional staff significantly increased the capacity of the Executive Director to further develop programs and systems of the organization. Improved online ordering capabilities impacted the greater food hub community who use Local Orbit because the features we developed with Local Orbit can be utilized by those other food hubs. Had we just built our own proprietary system, it would have just been for us. In this way, we could leverage our grant funds to benefit other food hubs. The addition of the second refrigerated van has had the biggest impact on the community because we could increase our food procurement and distribution which means more sales for small farms and more local food for Tahoe. A cold storage unit in Portola helped us expand to a new growing region. Mini-hubs allow farms to drop and safely store their products for pick-up. To increase our network of

small farms and increase our supply of local food, we need mini-hubs in new regions.

iv. **Goal/Objective 4: Sustainability of the organization is measured through new grower relationships and increased sales.**

**a. Progress Made:** We have increased our number of farmers by 20 and our sales have increased significantly over last year growing from an average of \$7,000 in weekly sales during the summer to over \$10,000. And in winter, sales grew from an average of \$3,500 in weekly sales to \$4,250. On this trajectory, we are growing 35-45% per year. At this rate, keeping supply is of utmost concern. Growth can only increase with increased supply. A goal of the Producer Partner Coordinator is to work with existing farms to increase production and reach out to new farmers to build our supply base. We will crest \$317K in total annual sales in 2016 and the kick-start of this grant has put us on track to reach \$500K by 2017. We hope to attract new growers as well through the videos we made at our Small Farm Workshop. We will post two videos to our website's Producer Partner's Page. One on Food Safety Planning and another on Crop Planning.

**b. Impact on Community:** By increasing the number of farms we work with...we are helping more small farms be viable, increasing the security of our local food economy and getting more local food to more people in our community. But most importantly, we are increasing the sustainability of the food hub to provide a significant community service by creating a local, food distribution system. The organization's Farm to Market program is our primary earned income model. The goal for this program to fuel the programmatic development of the organization and rely less on grants and donations over the next 5-10 years. Being able to fund our own programs will ensure sustainability and success of the organization that will feed our community in perpetuity. Until then, and beyond, continued support from the community will ensure our sustainability because at our foundation is support from our community. Even when the earned income is close to bringing us in financial balance, we will need the community to advocate for more local sourcing and to donate. When we say CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), we are not just talking about a weekly box of vegetables but rather all the different ways a community can support its local agriculture. Just as community members support their local watershed and land conservation efforts, a community should support the development of their local foodshed to build sustainability.

v. **Goal/Objective 5: Increase consumption of regionally sourced food**

**a. Progress Made:** Increase in consumption of regionally sourced food can be measured in multiple ways. The most obvious is the number of wholesale buyers. Since the grant began in October 2014, we have added over 20 new wholesale buyers. The Farm to Market Manager's primary job was to increase demand by reaching out to new accounts. We meet with chefs and other wholesale buyers to explain how our program works. We put together "Tasting Boxes" that we distribute to chefs to give them a sample of the local, fresh and seasonal products we carry. Direct outreach has proven very effective in gaining new buyers but word of mouth is spreading. We could say that for every three

accounts we gain one new account from word of mouth. Our Farm to School program (F2S) increased from 4,800lbs in 2014 to over 11,000lbs of local food in schools meals in 2015. In 2015, we launched a monthly food donation program to our local food bank ensuring equal access to the food we source. We call it our Healthy Food Access initiative. In February 2014, we opened a small, retail store or Farm Shop. The Farm Shop is open two days week and provides another way for us to move more small, farm food but also connect with the community on who we are and what we do. Our Build Your Own Box program (BYOB) grew from 2 groups to 10 groups. BYOB is a multi-farm CSA program for groups of 6 or more. We have 5 groups of neighbors and 5 businesses.

**b. Impact on Community:** The whole purpose of the food hub is to increase consumption of regionally sourced foods. Increasing consumption only comes, however, with increased access so we have created multiple ways to get local food out into the community from restaurants and Farm to School, to food banks, our Farm Shop and BYOB program. To increase consumption of regionally sourced food, we need to educate consumers in order to drive demand. Community outreach and education is a core objective of the Tahoe Food Hub. We hosted or participated in over 20 community outreach events from October 2014 to December 2015. These events include tabling at community events, hosting fundraisers, organizing community dinners and coordinating farmer & chef conferences. Through our efforts, a groundswell has begun and people are realizing the economic importance of supporting small farms and why their sustainably grown food is better for our health and the environment. For the farmers we serve, we are seeing an increase in how much they make available to the food hub each week which means they are pursuing fewer of their own direct channels. It demonstrates that food hubs fill a critical portion in a farmers diversified business portfolio enabling them to grow more and market less. We are manifesting our mission to galvanize our community to build a sustainable, equitable and regional food system.

**2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable. Include further explanation if necessary.**

- i. **Number of direct jobs created:** four
- ii. **Number of jobs retained:** four
- iii. **Number of indirect jobs created:** two
- iv. **Number of markets expanded:** twenty
- v. **Number of new markets established:** twenty
- vi. **Market sales increased:** In 2015, sales increased from \$200,500 in 2014 to \$317,700. An increase of 37%.
- vii. **Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:** 40
  - a. **Percent Increase:** 50%

**3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?** Yes, we initiated our Farm to School program within our district that has an average of 42% Free & Reduced (three school sites have over 50% F&R). We launched our monthly veggie donation program with our local food bank, Project Mana. We donated 2,280 lbs. which is the equivalent of approximately 1,340 meals. Our Marketing Manager launched our Build Your Own Box program (BYOB) which is similar to a multi-farm CSA program but marketed to local businesses. It offers a way for employers to create access to fresh, local sustainably grown foods for their

employees. BYOB is increasing access to fresh, local produce for ethnic groups. For these groups, a traditional CSA program is not always convenient or as accessible as when their employer makes it available to them at their workplace. One particular example is a local painting company. Their workforce is 85% Hispanic. They have 12 employees in their BYOB farm share program.

**4. Discuss your community partnerships.**

**i. Who are your community partners?**

- a. Tahoe Truckee Unified School District (TTUSD) – Our school district is very committed to scratch cooking using whole fresh ingredients. Our Farm to School program is a perfect fit for them and they are very supportive of bringing local food into school meals. They work with us on crop planning to identify key crops for school meals. They purchased over 11,000lbs of local food in 2015.
- b. Project Mana (our local hunger relief agency) - We launched a monthly veggie donation program for those in need. Project Mana is helping to share our farmer stories with their clients using farmers signs we made using the LFPP grant. And this summer we started a gleaning team. We had six successful gleans and rescued over 7,000lbs of local, organic produce for those in need.
- c. Nutrition Coalition – This is a parent/teacher grassroots organization that organizes our Harvest of the Month program in the schools. They have been very receptive to having us source the monthly food and bring in guest farmers to speak to the kids.
- d. Slow Food Lake Tahoe - Slow Food is our outreach and advocacy partner. They help us promote our events and programs. We co-host outreach events like Community Soup Nights. And the food hub hosts their skillshare workshops at our Farm Shop.
- e. Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation – They advise their donors on funds they can support. They host an annual giving program for local nonprofits from which we raised over \$3,500 during the 2015 holiday season.
- f. Sierra Education Watershed Partnership (SWEP) – We have collaborated with SWEP on grants in the past. SWEP works with students on service learning projects which benefit the local environment. SWEP brings groups of students to our education farm at the Sierra Agroecology Center.
- g. UC Cooperative Extension – We partnered with their Small Farm Advisor and Community Outreach Specialist to lead our Food Safety Planning session at our Small Farm Workshop.

- ii. **How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?** The school district and Project Mana helped us reach under-served populations by serving local food to ethnic groups and those eligible for Free & Reduced. The donation program with Project Mana not only fed those in need but helped us provide more sales to local farms focusing on surplus crops farmers had. The Harvest of the Month Program was another way to provide additional sales to local farms while educating students on what the food hub was doing as well as parents of all students. It is a great outreach effort. The tours hosted by SWEP and other teachers at our education farm help enhance our Farm to School program. Our “local” farms are 50-100 miles away so by being able to bring students to a working farm within 15 miles is an incredible asset.

- iii. **How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?** The Farm to School program will only increase

and get better over time. Our goal is to reach 25% local food in school meals by 2020. We will continue to partner with the school district on fundraising events where we raise money to help the school offset the higher price of local food. The program to donate food to our local hunger relief agency, will only increase over time too. We average \$300 a month and we plan to get that to \$500 by 2017. As we build our own Farm to School program, we will continue to seek grant funding to build programming. We want to partner with Harvest of the Month and the Nutrition Coalition to supplement their in-classroom education on health & nutrition and engage students on why local and sustainable food is good for our economy, environment and society. We are planning more collaborative events with Slow Food Lake Tahoe. They advocate for the work of the Tahoe Food Hub letting more people know about why to support local and sustainable food but also where the public can support us and buy the food we source. We are looking forward to having SWEP out to the Sierra Agroecology Center for school tours in the spring and fall each year. When students visit the center, they learn about growing food in an alpine ecosystem. We lead them on experiential learning activities which correspond to what they are learning in the classrooms.

5. **Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how has their work contributed to the results achieved thus far?** Our biggest contract was with Plumas Rural Services who handled the employment of our Producer Partner Coordinator. Moving forward, we have brought this position in-house and will pay for this position out of our general fund. The LFPP grant gave us the jump start to hire this position and the increased sales as a result of having both the Producer Partner Coordinator and Farm to Market Manager have enabled us to retain this position without grant support. The Farm to Market Manager and Assistant were both paid as contractors and were critical in finding, retaining, cultivating new accounts and developing our public Farm Shop. The funding from the LFPP grant provided has also increased our capacity to bring the Farm to Market positions in house as well which is really exciting to pay these positions as employees and not contractors. The essence of the grant intended to increase supply and demand simultaneously. Both the Producer Partner Coordinator and Farm to Market Manager positions worked hand in hand to increase supply and demand respectfully. Without these two positions the objectives of the grant would not have been realized. Their work helped us meet and exceed grant objectives to increase production, sales and consumption of local food.
6. **Have you publicized any results yet?**
  - i. **If yes, how did you publicize the results?** The Farm to Market program was featured in three newspaper articles and one magazine in 2015. Our Healthy Food and Access program which is an initiative of Farm to Market was featured in two newspaper articles and one magazine. We are really excited for the opportunity to share the success of the Tahoe Food Hub with our community. We also keep the public informed of our accomplishments through social media, monthly e-newsletters, our website, radio ads and community outreach events. We are in the process of posting our Small Farm Workshop videos to our website's Producer Resource Page. We will be sharing this with the USDA and the Wallace Center so these resources can be shared with producers everywhere.
  - ii. **To whom did you publicize the results?** The entire North Lake Tahoe community through newspaper articles (20,000 reached), subscribers to our newsletter (1,050 reached), and followers on social media (1950 reached). And on our website. We launched our NEW website On January 4, 2015. And in September 2015, we launched

our membership program, Hubster, to build comradery and a community for building a regional food system. Our partner organizations are great about sharing our social media posts and newsletters which expands our reach even further.

- iii. **How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?** See answer above.

**7. Have you collected any feedback thus far about your work?**

- i. **If so, how did you collect the information?** At both our 2014 and 2015 Farmer & Chef Symposium, we had our farmers complete a survey and our wholesale buyers complete a survey. Feedback from these two groups is on-going through the crop planning process with growers and orders with buyers. At our retail store, we collect feedback from the public on what they would like to see in the store and our involvement in the community. We receive feedback through social media on our Facebook page and from comments through our website
- ii. **What feedback was relayed?** We have learned more about our buyers and how we can better serve their needs and increase their orders. We have learned more about our farmers through crop planning on how best the food hub can support their business. And through community outreach, we have learned how the public would like to be involved with the food hub and how we can improve our community service. Some specific comments:
- a. Buyers: "more delivery days," "service fee included in price,"
  - b. Farmers: "not just projections but advance commitments to buy what we grow,"
  - c. Public: "Farm Shop open more days," "CSA boxes available,"

**8. Budget Summary:**

- i. **Were there revisions to the budget during the reporting period? (As a reminder, budget changes that are substantive (e.g. changes in line items or amounts that exceed 20% of the original request) must be submitted via separate documentation by contacting LFPP staff. Changes indicated below are not approved until you have obtained prior approval.)** NO, we did not make any revisions to the budget that exceeded 20%.
- a. **If so, briefly describe the reasoning if the budget line item changed by more than 20%:**
  - b. **Provide the date that LFPP staff provided prior approval for the revisions of a budget line item that changed by more than 20%, if applicable:**
- ii. **Total amount spent during reporting period:**

Personnel:	\$26,579.05
Contractual:	\$52,252.94
Equipment Purchases:	\$13,620.29
Travel:	\$0
Supplies:	\$387.92
Other:	\$1002.58
Indirect Costs:	\$6,156.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$99,998.78</b>



- iii. **Amount of matching funds/in-kind contributions used during the reporting period:**  
\$38,611.98
- iv. **Did the project generate any income? Yes**
  - a. **If yes, how much was generated and how was it used?** \$83,700 in gross income was generated from Farm to Market program between October 2014 – September 2015. Our Farm to Market program is an earned income model for our nonprofit organization. All proceeds from the program go back to further develop the program whose mission is to build a regional food distribution system. We charge our wholesale buyers a 25% service fee. The \$83,700 reflects the dollars raised from this program. The fee represents the value of our service to provide access to local food. It is an unconventional approach to food distribution where typically the price includes all fees. At Tahoe Food Hub, we want to provide transparency so buyers understand the true cost of their food and the value of the service to get it sourced and delivered. We are constantly assessing what improvements we need to make in order to support more local, small farms and increase access to local food for the North Lake Tahoe Community. If we can build a reliable, consistent, quality and sustainable food system that supports regional producers, Tahoe Food Hub will have greatly enhanced the efforts of the Local Food Promotion Program because we will have proven that people want local food, are willing to pay for it and we can get it to them.

**9. Lessons Learned:**

- i. **Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed). Loss of regular customers in winter.**  
Our LFPP grant experience was extremely positive. The grant front-loaded our capacity to realize the potential we have as an organization to aggregate supply and generate demand for local food. With this confidence we could set forth a strategy to leverage grants funds for long term sustainability. It is important to realize with a grant of this size that it is finite and you have to utilize funds wisely so programs and services don't become dependent upon them but rather stronger and more self-reliant. Our Farm to market program is more economical stable because of the LFPP grant. By increasing our pool of suppliers and buyer base we are able to move more local, farm food. Moving more food means more income to run the organization, scale-up and prepare for growth. Moving more food would only have been possible with the LFPP grant money we used to increase capacity and infrastructure such as hiring three support staff, improving ordering software and retrofitting our 2<sup>nd</sup> delivery truck to have refrigeration. Having the increased capacity and infrastructure allowed us to grow as an organization. The only negative experience was losing some time at the beginning of the grant period to hire staff for the positions outlined in the grant. The grant began October 2014 but we didn't get everyone hired and in place till December. But I don't see any other way around that unless the grant builds in a planning period to get things in place.
- ii. **If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:** n/a

iii. **Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:**

We learned a few lessons in the administration of the grant...

- a. We hired one of our staff as a contractor and it created an end date for the project. As a result, their performance tapered off as we neared the end of the contract. Had they been an employee from the beginning, their project assignment would have been viewed as never ending and their performance would have endured because they would have seen their employment as ongoing. We have since brought this position in house as an employee.
- b. Set clear goals and objectives with deadlines. Don't assume everyone is self-motivated, shares your vision and takes initiative. Employees no matter their credentials or experience need guidance and structure. In our case, we realized one staff needed more direction than his past work experience would have indicated and we lost some time out of the gate but we quickly got back on track.

**10. Future Work:**

- i. **How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.**

Our Farm to Market program is the cornerstone of our organization. The LFPP grant gave us the capital to invest in operations and realize the potential it has to build a regional food economy. We are taking the experience of the past year and building upon its success to support more farmers and deliver more food. The grant helped us scale up to the next level so we could not only hire but retain three part-time and full-time seasonal employees. Before it was one part-time employee and the executive director. And we are on track to hire a fourth for summer 2016.

One of the biggest impacts we saw on our supply side was that more farmers are shifting their distribution over to the food hub for its efficiency and they began doing less farmers markets and direct to retail. That is a really good sign! And on the demand side, more chefs are interested in sourcing from the food hub because of everything they have heard but also from customers asking if they are sourcing from the food hub. Consumers are driving demand which is also a really good sign. What this means, we are being recognized as a legit food distributor with incredible quality, freshness and a food story. Over the past 6-months especially, more and more people are saying, "we see the food hub everywhere." And others saying, "You're not just one truck anymore. You're really moving some food and making a difference."

But what people love most is that we are more than just a food distributor. All of our food has a story and the quality is in the taste. We have awesome community events to educate people about the importance of local & sustainable food, we have a growing Farm to School program that brings local food into the schools and connects students to where their food comes from, we donate food to our local food bank as well as organize gleanings to harvest surplus crops and donate that food to the food bank as well. In

2015, we sold over 13,000lbs of local food to the schools and donated over 7,000lbs of gleaned food from local farms.

What we love most is word is spreading amongst the local agricultural community and that the Tahoe Food Hub should be an integral part of a farmer's distribution plan. More farmers are calling us all the time to get involved. Growing our supplier base is all about relationships. We treat our farmers like family. We do annual site visits, we conduct a winter and summer crop plan and host workshops to provide growers with the technical skills training they need. With the help of the LFPP grant, we are taking the crop planning process we have developed and creating a manual so we have documentation for this complex, involved but necessary process.

- ii. **Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?** We are extremely excited for the future. And the LFPP grant has given us the confidence to get there. We are already seeing the need for a larger warehouse space. We are currently in a 1200sf space which includes a small retail store that serves as our Farm Shop or produce stand. We will most likely keep the Farm Shop as it services a geographic area of Tahoe with no grocery stores so it provides a large community benefit and has become adored by local residents. We would like to get a 5,000sf warehouse so we can plan for growth and be closer to Highway 80 for easier receipt of product. The warehouse would have future plans for a commercial kitchen to incubate specialty food businesses and have a community dining hall. We are also seeing the need for a third truck with 4WD so we can expand our pick-up and delivery options. With a third truck, we could have two trucks delivering and a third truck picking up food. As it is now, with just two trucks, we can't get to some areas where we have farms because we need both trucks to the areas we already service. With a third truck, we could more easily access our pick-up site in Portola where grants funds helped us refurbish a walk-in cooler for farmers to drop produce. Currently, the farmers need to deliver it to us but with a third truck, we could pick up the food saving the farmers a trip.